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THE ATHENÆUM.



LONDON:  
JOHN C. FRANCIS,  
*ATHENÆUM OFFICE,*  
BREAM'S BUILDINGS, CHANCERY LANE, E.C.

# THE ATHENÆUM

Journal of English and Foreign Literature, Science,  
the Fine Arts, Music, and the Drama.

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# THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY OF THE 'ATHENÆUM.'

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[From the *Athenæum* of January 1, 1898.]

To-DAY is the seventieth birthday of the *Athenæum*. Analogies drawn between the career of a man and the career of a journal are generally superficial and misleading, for nothing but continuity of tradition can make an organic whole of any journal's life, howsoever vigorous that life may have been. In most of the journals of Europe—literary, scientific, political, or social—there has occurred at intervals a solution of that continuity without which no aggregation of parts can ever become a whole. Indeed, the vicissitudes of periodicals are proverbial. How often does it happen that a journal which has for years been running on certain well-recognized lines becomes suddenly subject to a cataclysm by which all is changed! Sometimes a change of proprietor and sometimes a change of editor will transmute the old paper into a new

one, nothing being left but the name, which too often becomes misleading. Every view the journal has hitherto taken, every sentence it has hitherto uttered, will probably be in direct antagonism to its new creed. There is no need to give instances of this; every reader can furnish them for himself. Now it is because the *Athenæum* has been subject to none of these vicissitudes that between its career and that of a man there is a certain unique analogy.

Within two years of the time when Silk Buckingham started it (in 1828), it passed into the hands of a member of the family that now owns it, a man whose principles, ethical and literary, were exactly those which have guided it ever since. Independence was its watchword then, as independence is its watchword now. In the literary arena of that time there was a great dragon which the *Athenæum* went out to kill, exactly as to-day the *Athenæum* goes out to kill the contemporary and smaller dragons by which that arena is infested. In every department of human activity there is a dragon of some kind which prevents the native energy of the competitor from getting free scope and fair play. Nature is infinite in the riches she squanders upon man; so infinite, indeed, that among all the millions of men, women, and children on this earth, each one is as marvellously an individual—as marvellously unlike any other individual—as if he had just wandered from the canals of the planet Mars. Nor is this all: as regards function, each of these individuals has gifts that make him a specialist; each one is organized to do well something worth doing if society will afford him a chance. But there are dragons in the way of each.

One man, for instance, is meant by Nature for a soldier, and is fit for nothing else ; but there is the dragon of our military system standing in the way. Hence the chances are that he becomes not a good soldier, but a muddle - headed lawyer or a "queer" priest. Another is born with that love of arithmetic and accounts which is such a marvel to those who detest figures, as poets generally do ; but there stands some dragon in the way which prevents the born accountant from becoming a banker or something of that kind. If such a man is driven to turn his energies to something else—especially if he turns them to painting pictures or writing verses—he becomes a bore to himself, and to the *Athenæum* critic a woe indeed.

Another man is born neither for soldiering nor for making laws nor for making up passbooks, but for that other kind of book-making of which Scripture tells us "there is no end," and in the way of this kind of man seventy years ago there stood a dragon. His name, as Mr. John C. Francis's monograph reminds us, was Trade Criticism. Of that particular monster this is Charles Wentworth Dilke's own description :—

"The faithful chronicle of all that is interesting to the Poet and the Philosopher is sought to be preserved in the columns of the *Athenæum* ; and for the integrity of its Reviews it has, in these oppressive days, obtained almost a chivalrous character. It is a matter of notoriety that the principal literary papers are the mere bellows to the great publishing forges, and are used but to puff the works as they go on. The *Athenæum* asserts, and will maintain, its independence. It is under the influence of no Publisher, and is in no way swayed by the trade winds that carry

all other craft along with them.....The Readers of this Journal may be assured that the great cause of truth and intelligence which is sought to be advocated in these columns will, in the days to come, experience but a sincerer and more earnest partizan in the *Athenæum*."

Of all the dragons that ever stood in the way of the man of letters who had neither influence nor money, the Dragon of Trade Criticism was surely the most pestiferous. There had really been more hope for the "outside writing man," without such privileges as money or connexion can buy, when he confronted the eighteenth century Dragon of Patronage than then when he confronted the dragon that the *Athenæum* was to slay. Yes, all things considered, it was less difficult in the time of Dr. Johnson for the man of letters without connexions, money, or influence to find a patron than for such a man, at the time when the *Athenæum* was started, to find a powerful publisher who would get his book puffed by the hired "bellows" of criticism as well as buy it.

As bravely, however, as Beowulf sallied out to kill the "fire-drake" and killed it, as bravely as Guy of Warwick sallied out to kill the Northumbrian dragon and killed it, as bravely as Sir John Lambton sallied out to kill the Lambton Worm and killed it, so bravely the *Athenæum* sallied out to kill the Dragon of Trade Criticism and killed it. But who knows how many a "mute, inglorious Milton" may have perished before the *Athenæum* put lance in rest to give bard and bardling that freedom of play which Nature demands for all? And what has been the result of that "mighty slaying"?

If nowadays a man of real literary ability should be unable to find favour with one of the more important publishing houses, and if in consequence he should have to secure the services of the least important publisher in London, he need not fear lest his book should lose any chances of success from that fact. The "bellows" of trade criticism being broken, his book will be judged on its merits, without the smallest reference to the publishing house that brings it out. Perhaps it is the sweet remembrance of this fact that explains the affectionate way in which the minor bard speaks, or ought to speak, of the *Athenæum*. Without the aid of the *Athenæum* many of his own interesting fraternity could never have found public utterance at all. And although we are keeping the seventieth birthday of that venerable dragon-slayer he is as full of fight as ever—so full that, like the aged Beowulf, when any new foe appears in the shape of dishonest "Log-roller," venal "Smart Slasher," or vulgar "Interview-monger," he brushes aside all younger warrior-heroes, and says, "Leave him to me."

Our business, however, is not to sing the praises of the *Athenæum* as a dragon-slayer. It is to discuss the question of that unity and continuity of tradition which sets the *Athenæum* apart from all other journals. Not that a man or a journal deserves honour for having made no change of opinion. It is the fool, and not the wise man, upon whom the lesson of life has worked so slight an effect that his opinions have suffered no change. But the laws of cause and effect in literary art are, as we have often said, unchangeable and eternal. The great writers, whether of

Greece, Italy, England, or Germany, shine with the same kind of light; like the fixed stars, they are all akin. The *Athenæum* has never mistaken any one of these luminaries for a meteor, though, not being infallible, it may occasionally have gazed through its amiable glass at a meteor like Alexander Smith and hailed him for a new "unfold-ing star." Ask any reader of the *Athenæum* when the following words about Tennyson appeared in its columns; he will say, "Probably last week." They appeared in 1829. "We have never before," it said,

"seen a prize poem which indicated really first-rate poetical genius, and which would have done honour to any man that ever wrote. Such we do not hesitate to affirm is the little work before us."

It then gives a well-selected extract of some length from the poem, and winds up a thoroughly appreciative notice with the words, "How many men for a century who have lived could have equalled this?"

But what the *Athenæum* specially claims to have inherited without change from the traditions of its founders is that deep sense of the enormous responsibility of anonymous criticism which is seen in every line contributed by the Maurice and Sterling group who spoke through its columns. While in a signed article the things said have the power of the utterer's voice and none other, in an unsigned article the speaker is clothed with all the authority of the journal in which he writes. Even for those who are behind the scenes and know that the critique expresses the opinion of only one writer it is difficult not to be impressed by the accent of authority in

the editorial "we." But with regard to the general public, the reader of a review article finds it impossible to escape from the authority of the "we," and the power of a single writer to benefit or to injure an author is so great that none but the most deeply conscientious men ought to enter the ranks of the anonymous reviewers. These were the views of Maurice and Sterling; and that they are shared by all the best writers of our time there can be no doubt. Some very illustrious men have given very emphatic expression to them. On a certain memorable occasion, at a little dinner-party at 16, Cheyne Walk, one of the guests related an anecdote of his having accidentally met an old acquaintance who had deeply disgraced himself, and told how he had stood "dividing the swift mind" as to whether he could or could not offer the man his hand. "I think I should have offered him mine," said Rossetti, "although no one detests his offence more than I do"; and then the conversation ran upon the question as to the various kinds of offenders with whom old friends could not shake hands. "There is one kind of miscreant," said Rossetti, "whom you have forgotten to name—a miscreant who in kind of meanness and infamy cannot well be beaten, the man who in an anonymous journal tells the world that a poem or picture is bad when he knows it to be good. That is the man who should never defile my hand by his touch. By God, if I met such a man at a dinner-table I must not kick him, I suppose; but I could not, and would not, taste bread and salt with him. I would quietly get up and go." Tennyson, on afterwards being told this story, said:—"And who would

not do the same?—Such a man has been guilty of sacrilege—sacrilege against art.” Maurice, Sterling, and the other writers in the first volume of the *Athenæum* worked on the great principle that the critic’s primary duty is to seek and to bring to light those treasures of art and literature that the busy world is only too apt to pass by. Their pet abhorrence was the cheap smartness of Jeffrey and certain of his coadjutors; and from its commencement the *Athenæum* has striven to avoid slashing and smart writing. A difficult thing to avoid, no doubt, for nothing is so easy to achieve as that insolent and vulgar slashing which the half-educated amateur thinks so clever. Of all forms of writing, the founders of the *Athenæum* held the shallow smart style to be the cheapest and also the most despicable. And here again the views of the *Athenæum* have remained unchanged. The critic who works “without a conscience or an aim” knows only too well that it pays to pander to the most lamentable of all the weaknesses of human nature—the love that people have of seeing each other attacked and vilified; it pays for a time until it defeats itself. For although man has a strong instinct for admiration—else had he never reached his present position in the conscious world—he has, running side by side with this instinct, another strong instinct—the instinct for contempt. A reviewer’s ridicule poured upon a writer titillates the reader with a sense of his own superiority. It is by pandering to this lower instinct that the unprincipled journalist hopes to kill two birds with one stone—to gratify his own malignity and low-bred love of insolence, and to make profit while doing so. Although

cynicism may certainly exist alongside great talent, it is far more likely to be found where there is no talent at all. Many brilliant writers have written in this journal, but rarely, if ever, have truth and honesty of criticism been sacrificed for a smart saying. One of these writers—the greatest wit of the nineteenth century—used to say, in honest disparagement of what were considered his own prodigious powers of wit, “I will engage in six lessons to teach any man to do this kind of thing as well as I do, if he thinks it worth his while to learn.” And the *Athenæum* at the time when Hood was reviewing Dickens in its columns could have said the same thing. The smart reviewer, however, mistakes insolence for wit, and among the low-minded insolence needs no teaching. When, however, the *Athenæum* took upon itself the task of slashing the slasher, as in Maurice’s famous onslaught upon Jeffrey, it knew well how to lay on the whip. The following words are about the mildest in the article:—

“In criticism, before Mr. Jeffrey became notorious for his attempts to philosophize upon poetry, this country had been fed upon such weak and mawkish spoon meat that it is no wonder we did not for some time discover how really vague, unsubstantial, and unsatisfactory were the speculations of this celebrated author. Any one who looks back to his writings from the vantage ground on which we now stand will readily perceive that, under a considerable appearance of freshness and novelty, and of a tendency to look at poetry in connexion with the nature of the human mind, instead of with the rules of the critics, there is really to be found little more than an elaborate attention to details, a wish to conciliate the appearance of originality

with a real determination to oppose no popular prejudice, and a want of any fine discrimination between the essential characteristics of great authors. His disgraceful obstinacy in depreciating Wordsworth and exaggerating the merits of various men of undeniable elegance of mind, but of no creative power whatsoever, is lamentable proof of wilfulness and prejudice. He has given us no tolerable estimate of the merits of any living poet, except, perhaps, Mr. Moore, whom his mind is exactly calculated to appreciate. In this case, the want of profoundness, both of thought and feeling, in the critic, becomes of less importance, from the absence of anything in the poet on which it could be exercised ; while all Mr. Jeffrey's liveliness, prettiness, and neatness of mind are brought into full play by the corresponding qualities in the object of his admiration."

In these strictures by F. D. Maurice there is nothing that can be challenged, save what is said about Moore's being the only poet whom Jeffrey could appreciate. It is to Jeffrey's everlasting honour that he fully understood and warmly admired the remarkable genius of George Crabbe, the greatest "modernity" poet that has appeared since Villon. It is odd, by-the-by, that in these days, when there is again some talk about the poetry of realism ("modernity"), Crabbe's name is never mentioned.

There is no work of imagination, howsoever high, that cannot easily be turned into ridicule, as we see by reading the critiques in some of the leading critical organs of the day upon Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats. It was against such criticism as this that the *Athenæum* from the first set its face. We will not here go over the story of the attacks that embittered Keats's life, and gave pain

to Shelley, and tried hard to shut out Wordsworth from the suffrages of the world, but will offer a few remarks upon the attitude that was taken up in the first volume of the *Athenaeum* in regard to one poem of Coleridge's, 'Christabel.' Owing to Jeffrey's having admitted into his review that infamous onslaught upon 'Christabel' which is a standing disgrace to English criticism—a standing disgrace, indeed, to the literary character—it became the foolish fashion to gibe at it. In an article on 'Christabel' and its critics which appeared in the *Athenaeum* of July 2nd, 1828—an article which is specially interesting from the fact that it quotes from an early unrevised edition of the poem certain lovely verses that were afterwards omitted by the poet—the critic says boldly what everybody dare say now, that the very qualities in the poem which to the man of prose are the subject of ridicule are the qualities which have given immortality to the greatest imaginative work of the world:—

"The very first lines of 'Christabel' are frequently selected as objects of ridicule. Be it remembered that they are the opening of a tale of witchery; and that unless they are read in that good faith and singleness of heart with which a child would listen to such a story, they are not heard with the predisposition to which alone the author addressed himself:—

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock;  
Tu-whit!—Tu—who!  
And bark, again! the crowing cock,  
How drowsily it crew.  
Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,  
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;  
From her kennel, beneath the rock,  
She makes answer to the clock,  
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the ho'ir  
Ever and aye, moonshine or shower,  
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;  
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Now, I confess, I do not see what there is more absurd in this than in the croaking raven of Virgil ; or, though it be talked of as the drivelling folly of Bottom, why it is a whit less dignified than the song of Puck,

Whilst the scritch-owl, scritchting loud,  
Puts the wretch that lies in woe,  
In remembrance of a shroud ;

or, again, than the lay of "Winter,"

When nightly sings the staring owl,  
Tu—whu;  
Tu—whit; Tu—whu.

I avow that these verses seem to me admirably calculated for bringing before the reader the 'witching hour of night,' with all that thrilling and ghost ridden feeling which is the proper recipient of the mysterious story. And as to the boarding-school-miss delicacy about the gender of the mastiff, we hear no objection to Cowper's phrase of

Kilwick's echoing wood,  
Where oft the bitch-fox hides her hapless brood.

And judging from the analogy of human beings, and from long and general tradition, an ancient female of the dog species is as likely to be distinguished above the male by supernatural endowments, and intimacy with the foul fiend, as is confessedly the case among human beings. In the succeeding lines there is nothing to observe upon (except their exquisite and pictorial beauty) unless, with a certain notorious critic, I were to remark the phrase in the third of these lines :—

She had dreams all yesteruight  
Of her own betrothed knight ;  
Dreams that made her moan and leap,  
As on her bed she lay in sleep.

The critic who has objected to the employment of the word 'leap' as an expression for the restlessness occasioned by a painful dream might perhaps be puzzled to reply if he were asked why it is inappropriate. The next lines to these are beautiful specimens of a kind of excellence which runs through the whole poem—the presentation, namely, of the clearest and brightest pictures by the smallest number of words :—

She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
 The breezes !hey were still also ;  
 And nought was green upon the oak,  
 But moss and rarest mistletoe :  
 She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,  
 And in silence prayeth she.

A hundred stanzas of details would not make plainer the terror and devotion of the lovely lady and the silent dimness of the ancient oak."

And this is so entirely in harmony with what the *Athenæum* now says about Coleridge that it might have appeared in these columns last week.

In estimating the literary insight of a journal started in 1828, the first and the chief thing is, of course, to inquire what were its views of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Moore. It is easy enough for people nowadays to have clear views upon the relative positions of these poets. Some readers of their work give preference to one of them and some to another. They have all been long dead, and the personal equation is also dead. But in 1828 they were all living except Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and partisanship was in relation to them all very strong. What has time done with the judgments of the *Athenæum* upon these? In the first volume of the *Athenæum* Maurice wrote appreciations of Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Moore; and it is remarkable that the position assigned to each of these poets is exactly the same as the *Athenæum* assigns to them to-day. Take, for instance, his remarks upon Wordsworth. Since these were made, the study of Wordsworth has passed into a religion, and yet but few better things have been said about him as poet, artist, and thinker than are to be found in this article written seventy years ago :—

"He pours into his personages the strong life and moving breath of genius; but they have little of the air of the mart or the farm-yard. They have, indeed, all that which is so completely wanting in the heroes of Lord Byron, the absolute truth of being, the nature which is so uniform under so many varieties; they are made up of the elements of universal, but want the accidents of social, humanity. Wordsworth appears to take no pleasure in watching the entangled threads of passion which bind together crowds with such many-coloured, yet scarcely distinguishable feelings. He retires from the conflict of mingled and heterogeneous interests. He loves to muse by winding rivers; but the tumultuous current of men's ordinary motives has little for his contemplation. He delights to gaze upon cities; but it is when 'all that mighty heart is lying still.'.....He diffuses his affections over everything around him, and lets them be restricted by no arbitrary limits, and confined within no sectarian enclosures. He looks round upon the world and upon man with eyes of serens rejoicing, and traces all the workings of that spirit of good of whose influence he is conscious in his own heart. But from his want of that mastery over forms which was never possessed so perfectly by any one as by Shakspeare he cannot make so intelligible to all men as he otherwise might the depth and value of his own feelings.....Like those angels who are made a flame of fire, he burns with a calm and holy light, and the radiance which shows so strange amid the contrasted glare and blackness of the present will blend with the dawning of a better time as with its native substance."

The same may be said of Maurice's remarks upon Shelley, the general estimate of whose work at that time was so different from the general estimate of it now, when enthusiastic students of it have to be reprimanded occasionally for their too liberal "chatter about Shelley":—

" We do not say that he wrote better poetry than Coleridge or Wordsworth, but that more habitually than they, or, indeed, than any one else we can remember, he thought and felt poetically. He cannot be conceived as performing the most ordinary action and not investing it with a wild gracefulness or imaginative splendour. Other men put out their minds into the task of ideal creation with something of effort and preparation ; they bare their arms for the wrestling, or gird their loins for the combat. But Shelley seems to have been always and all over poet. He did not delay to put on armour for the battle, but went forth in the naked beauty of that form which was in itself invulnerable, and with a glory blazing on his brow.

*'Αμφὶ δέ οἱ κεφαλῆ νέφος ἔστεφε δῖα θεάων  
χρύσεον, ἐκ δ' αὐτοῦ δᾶιε φλόγα παμφανώσαν.*

His whole being seems to have been absorbed and transfigured into poetry ; and though the sphere of his writings is as different from 'this dim spot, which men call earth,' as are the clouds of sunset from the world with whose horizon they mingle, yet it is not a region to which he was borne on the wings of a casual enthusiasm, but his fatherland and accustomed home. He did not first look at an object as it seems to other men, and then consider how it might be represented so as to please in poetry ; but his very perceptions seem to have been modified and exalted by his genius, and even his senses were inspired. It is on this account that his poems have such perfect unity of feeling. His labours do not show those inconsistencies which arise among other men from the variable humour and energy of the moment. They are but a homogeneous fragment of the permanent substance of his mind. Many may have felt that he has too completely thrown away the ordinary vestures of human nature that he may array himself with asphodel, and array his limbs in light ; but no one can have mistaken him for an ordinary masker, who assumes successively a

dozen different disguises, and wears none of them as if it were his proper garb."

On the other hand, if we read what Maurice says about the poetry of another man, whose work was in certain quarters as absurdly extolled as Shelley's work was absurdly depreciated, we shall be startled by the judicial nature of the criticism:—

"Mr. Moore is the writer who would be cited, if any were, as a contradiction to our statement that Ireland has never nourished a great poet. But there are so many substantial reasons against his claim, that it is not difficult to show its insufficiency. His poems are deficient in the first great requisite, that which ought to be the groundwork, or, as it were, the very spirit of their beauty, truth. If we look merely at their imagery, at the pictures of outward objects which they display to us, it is clear that in this they are found wanting. It is not that he regards them through a differently-coloured atmosphere, or on a different side, from other men, but that he studiously and elaborately represents them in a way in which no one ever saw them. It is not that he brings them too near him by a telescope, or examines them too much in detail with a microscope, or uses spectacles of green or purple, or looks at the landscape through a pictured window of a thousand different colours, or dims the glory of the sun by a smoky glass; but his very eye seems facet-cut, made up of innumerable different angles and surfaces, here refracting a ray, and there reflecting the corner of an object, so that he perceives no consistent or permanent appearance whatsoever, but lives in a universe of sparkling points and fragments, and wanders on from delusion to delusion. He never gives us a representation of what is; but, as if the world had, some time or other, in its childhood, chosen to put itself into masquerade, and he had since got possession of the cast-off finery, he arrays it anew in the tarnished tinsel

and old artificial flowers, and pompously exhibits it, as if in mockery of things as they are. Every one must have observed that, when we are placed in some accidental position, a bit of quartz or glass upon an open bank or distant hill will catch the rays of the sun and shine with a dazzling brightness. If Mr. Moore were describing the landscape in which this had occurred to him, he would omit the broad blue sky, the fields, the forests, the mountain, and the lake, to dwell upon and exaggerate this momentary and casual triviality, to illustrate it by a thousand pretty images, and expand it into a galaxy of splendour. His fancy never looks abroad to great views; his mind always fixes upon some petty salient point, instead of the whole. To get a notion of the heavens, it follows the zigzag flight of a butterfly; and rather than contemplate the teeming profusion of the earth in the general, it would hunt out some single snail, and then grow witty about a Frenchman's dinner, or Lord Eldon's decisions. In this respect, he and a Chinese painter are specimens of contrasted errors. The one delineates on his jars and screens only a part of what he sees, but frequently gives that part with amazing fidelity; though omitting, to be sure, the light and shade, perspective, expression, and so forth. Mr. Moore adds to everything he sees something of his own; which is not only shown so prominently as to throw into the background whatever scrap or angle of truth there might at first have been, but which is also utterly inconsistent with it."

And again, if we consider the pretensions of Southey and those who were claiming for him the place of a great epic poet, we shall find the same courageous impartiality of judgment as in regard to Moore:—

"Our readers then understand that we consider Mr. Southey a poet of no higher than the second order—a judgment which we have come to when estimating him by his best and not by

his worst poems, by ‘Roderick’ and ‘Kehama,’ not by the ‘Vision of Judgment’ or the ‘Tale of Paraguay.’ Yet, though we think his poetry inferior to that of many other English authors, it seems to us to display his mind in a more nearly perfect state than we find it in any of his other kinds of writing. As mere composition, the verse is far from being so faultless as the prose.”

Maurice attempted no formal appreciation of Byron and none of Keats, who were pushed out of the series of essays by the claims of Cobbett and Brougham. But the criticisms of these two poets scattered through the first volume of the *Athenæum* are in entire harmony with the other studies of poets.

The only great writer of his time to whom Maurice in these appreciations fails to do full justice is Scott. But this failure seems to arise not from prejudice, but from the deep unlikeness between the two men—one so reflective, generalizing, and “subjective,” the other the most “objective” and picturesque writer of the nineteenth century. This is one of the few subjects in which the *Athenæum* of to-day departs from the old tradition of the journal. Still, as will be seen below, Maurice says some admirably true things about Scott:—

“Sir Walter Scott is the greatest of observers. He seems to be, like the spirits, all eye and ear; but, unlike them, he has scarcely arrived at reflection, much less at intuition. He has looked with a close and searching, and above all, with a sympathetic eye, on everything around him, living or inactive. He has watched through the whole of his now waning life, (and may its final close be far distant!) the looks, the tones, the lightest indications of passion among men. He cannot be conceived as sitting for

even an hour in a stage-coach or a coffee-room without having drawn out and measured the characters of all his companions. Every sensitive or irritable line about the lips, every hair of the eyebrow upraised in the grimace and frankness of foolish admiration, or drawn together into the compressed strength of thought, every pugnacious or friendly trembling of the finger,—bring him but for five minutes within view of them, and he has them noted,—each of them the germ of a picture or the hint of a personage. He is one of the few men of our generation whom we may imagine actually going forth like Shakspere and Ben Jonson to ‘take humours’; and it is a shrewd and curious art, in which he must, doubtless, be a thorough proficient: it is one in which a treasure of really kind and generous feeling is of more use than wealth or rank, or even than those other prime requisites, caution and penetration. Seat him in the circle round the kitchen fire of a country alehouse, one of the blithest and most fertile scenes of study for an humble wayfaring observer, and it is impossible to doubt that Scott would speedily win his way into the merry affections of the whole party, find out the secrets of a dozen rough-coated breasts, and know who are the rich ones, who the brave ones, who the beauty, and who the oracle of the hamlet. The serving-maid would giggle while she filled his tumbler, the landlady smooth her apron with gracious attention while he spoke to her, the farmer open his mouth with astonishment at his knowledge of pigs and planting, the smith shake the rafters with a roar when some good-humoured jest had hit the dusty miller; and the most widely celebrated mind of modern literature would become an intimate with ploughmen and be held in honour by chimney-corner veterans. Or think of him benighted in some lonely cottage, how would he praise the ale, lay down a theory of peat-cutting, give grave advice on the roasting of potatoes, and teach some chubby-faced urchin to repeat a ballad or bawl a Jacobite Pæan.”

The truth seems to be that as the mere manner of Scott's dialogue is apt at times to become too bookish, Maurice took it for granted, without inquiry, that on these occasions the matter is also artificial. Scott is sometimes so anxious to get on with his story, that unless the characters are speaking in Scots he does not stay to put into colloquial idiom the substance of the thing said, but jots it down in the first lumbering prose sentences that come to hand. Had he allowed himself time to revise these jottings it would have been found that the substance of the thing said is almost always right.

But it will not do to allow this account of the past exploits of the *Athenæum* to carry us too far, and so, instead of interesting our readers, to bore them. Our excuse for making it is that retrospects like this, so good in the life-education of man the individual, are no less good in the life-education of a journal.

Those who are familiar with the great moralists of the ancient world—especially of the Eastern world, such as Confucius, Mencius, and the moralists of the Bible—will remember that their minds were much exercised with a question that nowadays troubles nobody, What is the difference between the wise man and the fool? If we were required to find an answer to this obsolete question, we should say that, in the chariot race of life, the wise man is the charioteer who at intervals looks backward over the course, looks forward over the course, and sees the running as a complete picture. From the dangers and the triumphs of the past he anticipates the dangers and the triumphs of the future; while the fool does nothing but lash his steeds and tear

along. To change the metaphor, the fool's life is a thing of shreds and patches, a conglomeration of little bits, a disparate medley of sleep-divided days. When he gets up of a morning he awakes to a new brief life of fourteen or sixteen hours, and each of these daily lives is more or less separated from the daily lives that went before. No doubt he does in a way remember these daily lives, but it is pretty much in the same way that a horse remembers his antecedent days in harness and out. To him and to the horse alike the scenery of the past is like the scenery of dreamland. It is an interesting mockery that has but little to do with the journey ahead. To the wise man the landscape of the past and the landscape of the present are but two districts of the same country, from which at intervals he stands and gazes at the looming perspective of the future. In a word, the life of the wise man being fused into one organic whole, he never grows old. The rose of life keeps on blooming until the shears close upon it. The life of the fool is minced up into numberless little lives by those same nightly invasions of the wizard Sleep, which the wise man uses as one of his agents in fusing *his* little daily lives into one. The *Athenæum*, by retrospects such as this, hopes to fuse its own little weekly lives into one, and thus to grow wiser as it grows older.

Our principles in the future, however, will be the same as they were in the past. Though bad literature will not escape without chastisement, our main attention will still be directed to that which is good. In criticizing imaginative literature,

whether in prose or verse, our motto in the future will be the same as the motto of Maurice and Sterling, the noble words of Queen Hippolyta in ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ “The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.” For though we reach to-day our seventieth year, it must not be supposed that we are old in any sense save that of the mere passage of years. If any one should be rude enough to say that in any other sense we are old, we for once shall lose what is called, or ought to be called, “*Athenæum urbanity*,” and shall remind that person or that journal, as the case may be, of that aphorism of Goethe’s in which he tells us that an old camel, be he ever so travel-worn, can still carry the burdens of many donkeys.

Time was when at three score years and ten a man was considered to have fully, and more than fully, played his part; but all that is changed, as is proved by the lives of some of the illustrious men of our own age—such as Victor Hugo and Tennyson, such as Bismarck, Moltke, and Mr. Gladstone. And if human life can thus bravely contradict the old idea that at three score years and ten there is necessarily any waning of man’s intellectual powers, is not the *Athenæum’s* contradiction of that sophism stronger still? Nevertheless, as regards the human camel, howsoever vigorous he may remain at the age mentioned by the Psalmist, a seventieth birthday is, even in these days of longevity, a good time for pausing to take stock of events. The time has then come for him

to say to himself, "These emulous weight-carriers, camels and donkeys, by my side are some of them old and some of them young, but as for me, it is a long time since I was a foal, and I will begin to take stock of the road with a view to the journey ahead." To return to the metaphor of the chariot race, when a driver has had as long a run as the *Athenæum* achieves to-day, he will (if years have brought him "the philosophic mind") pull up the well-worn steeds for a little breathing, and look back. Though the meaning of the race is in these days as far from man's guessing as it was in the time of the first Pharaoh, such a charioteer, wise as well as old, will by adopting this course learn at least the art of running and the art of winning. Many of those who started with him he will miss; but each one that has fallen away has been promptly replaced by another competitor, as eager and as hopeful as any one of those whose spokes and fellies are scattered on the ground, and whose horses are lying with legs outstretched, broken-winded, spavined, or dead.

And so it is with the *Athenæum* on its seventieth birthday. We look back through our career and recall the writers whose talents have gone to make the journal what it is—writers like Charles Lamb, Landor, Thomas Hood, Maurice, Sterling, Carlyle, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Douglas Jerrold, Mrs. Browning, Barry Cornwall, Mary Brotherhood, Miss Strickland, Sydney Dobell, Archbishop Whately, Westland Marston, Faraday, Sir William Hamilton, Sir Charles Lyell, and the rest. We remember the rise and fall of smart journal after smart

journal, whose audacity or whose insolence or whose fireworks were to illuminate the course and eclipse all those old-fashioned drivers with the dull motto of "honesty and fair play." We look back, and we remember these things, and the future seems full of hope.



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